

RIGHTEOUSNESS *and* PEACE  
*The best Means to prevent Ruin :*

Recommended in A

# SERMON

Preached at

*GUILD-HALL* Chappel,

(Sept. 25. 1681.) before the

LORD-MAYOR, &c.

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BY

THOMAS JEKYLL, M. A. and Preacher at  
*Newland* in the County of *Glocester*.

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*The Second Edition.*

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TO the Right Honourable

Sir **PATIENCE WARD, Kc.**

Lord Mayor of the City of **LONDON.**

And to the Right Honourable

Sir **JOHN MOORE, Kc.**

Lord Mayor Elect;

And to the

**Court of Aldermen.**

Right Honourable,

**H**OW much I have resolv'd and endeavour'd to decline such Publick Services as these, out of a real sense of my own unfitness for them, those that are concern'd in the disposal thereof,

can sufficiently bear me witness: for though I have sometimes appeared as publickly as I am like to do now; yet it hath been more out of Necessity than Choice. Nor do I see any cause at present to change my Opinion; but yet, having such a special Order for it, I find a great deal of

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

~~Reasoned for my Reason~~ : And indeed I should as much depart from my own sense of the thing it self, should I not do it now, as I should have done, to have ventured upon it without such an Obligation: For though in imitation of ~~the Prophet's~~ Faithfulness and Zeal for God and his Country, I thought it my Duty, as a Minister of the Gospel, and as a Native of this great City, whose Welfare I have so much reason to be concern'd for, to preach the Sermon; yet I should never have offered to print it, ~~that's your own Act and Deed, and not mine.~~ and therefore it would be presumption in me, and not modesty, to offer to excuse it. ~~May it but do as much good in the~~ Publication, as it was honestly intended in the Preaching, and then we shall all of us have our Ends, and many others also have cause to give thanks to God, and to pray that he would give your Lordships, in particular, a Name better than that of Sons and Daughters, and make you, and all your Brethren, as eminent for Goodness, as you are in Place and Dignity. That this Famous and Renowned City may be always as happy in its Magistrates, as it is already in its wholesom Laws and Constitutions. For which, and all other Blessings upon it, and you, none shall more heartily pray, than,

I Right Honourable,  
Your most obedient and humble Servant.

in Christ Jesus,  
THOMAS JEKYLL.



Jer. 5. 29.

*Shall I not visit for these things, saith  
the Lord? Shall not my Soul be  
avenged on such a Nation as this?*

**T**HE Prophet Jeremiah, was al-  
way a Man of very great Piety  
and Zeal for God, and very pas-  
sionately concerned for the Good  
and Welfare of his Country; the  
Calamities of which, he not only foretold, but  
liv'd also to bear a very great share in; and there-  
fore well may he be stiled, as he often is, the *Weep-  
ing Prophet*; since all the while he foresaw those  
Miseries, his mind must needs be very deeply af-  
fected with them, and in a sense suffer under them,  
before any of the rest of his unbelieving Coun-  
try-Men did; and the more too from their Wick-  
edness and Infidelity, which was indeed the great  
Occasion of them: For as he was a good Man  
in the general, he knew the Justice of God would  
not suffer such a Wicked Nation to go long un-  
punished: and as he was a Prophet in particular,  
he

he was told both the time and manner when  
 and how it should be done. Which though none  
 of us now dare pretend unto, yet upon a just esti-  
 mate of things, when we see *Wickedness* abounding,  
 and *Atheism* and *Prophaness* breaking in upon us  
 like a mighty Torrent; when *the love of many waxes*  
*cold*, and that *Zeal for God* which ought to be  
 in us all, is turned into an Artifice to promote  
 the interest of a Party; when *Charity to Men*,  
 which ought to be universal, extends it self no  
 farther than to those of our own way; nay, and  
 vents it self in *Malice* and *Revenge* against all  
 others, we may without any new Revelation,  
 by the signs of the times, that are already given us,  
 easily understand what shall be the end of these  
 things; and then it matters not which way the  
 Justice of God brings it to pass, since we have so  
 much Reason to fear he will certainly do it, let  
 our Destruction come from *Rome* or *France*, or  
 what is worse, let it be bred out of the corrupt  
 Humours of our own Bowels. Let it come from  
 far, or let it spring up at home, it is all one when  
 it is come; for whoever is the Instrument, God  
 is the Author; let who will be the Executioner,  
 God's Justice must first sign the Warrant for it,  
 and that it will certainly do, where ever Sin and  
 Wickedness grows rampant and outrageous.  
 There's the same Law and Justice for *England*  
 as for *Judah*, and if there be the same Sins, there  
 will

will be the same Visitation, and the same Vengeance. It is not, Shall I not visit for your Sins alone? but, *Shall I not visit for these things*, where-ever they are committed? He doth not say, *Shall not my Soul be avenged on this*, but, *on such a Nation as this*? And if we now are so, it concerns us as much as them.

The words in general, are a plain and full Declaration of the heavy Displeasure, and Just Indignation of God against *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, for their notorious and abominable Sins and Wickedness; and tho they are spoken by way of Question, yet they do not in the least express any doubting of the Truth of the Thing, but rather the contrary; for its a Rule in expounding Scripture, that affirmative Questions do very vehemently deny, and Negative Questions do strongly affirm, because they are in the nature of an Appeal about things, that are supposed to be on all hands granted; as for Example, *Doth God pervert Judgment*, or *doth the Almighty pervert Justice*? No, Job 8. 3. we know he neither doth, nor can. So again, *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right*? Yes, Gen. 18. doubtless he will. So here in the Text, *Shall he* 15. *not visit and take Vengeance*? Yes, certainly he shall and will, and there is none can hinder him.

But more particularly, in the Words there are two Parts.

*18. Zeph. 1. 18.* **18.** An Account of God's Purpose and Resolution concerning the Nation and People of the Jews, to punish them severely for their many and great Sins : and the Expression implies an intention of great Severity indeed, not only to correct them with some sore Judgment, but even to cut them off from being a People, *To make an utter riddance of them; Shall I not visit, shall not my Soul be avenged?* that is, I will do it with all my Might, and will delight in it too, whilst I thereby make my self amends for all the Trouble they have put me to. As he speaks also by the Prophet *Isaiah* in the like case; *Ah! I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.*

*2dly.* The Reason or Cause of this implied in the Text, and more at large expressed in the Chapter to which the Words refer; *Shall I not visit for these things,* before mentioned, *and be avenged* on such a People as are here described?

In the further prosecution of which, I shall by God's Grace endeavour to shew :

1. How God is said to visit a Nation or People.
2. What those things are that he thus visits for.
3. What Reason we of this Nation have to fear and expect such a thing. And,
4. What we are to do in such a Case, and under such Circumstances as ours are.

I. How

I. How God is said to visit a Nation or People? The word is in Scripture used in a threefold sense.

1. It's sometimes an expression of kindness, and intends deliverance, as *Gen. 50. 24. God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this Land: So Luke 1. 68. He hath visited and redeemed his People;* in both which places the latter expression shews the meaning of the former. Therefore the Psalmist prays that God would *visit him with his Salvation.* But this cannot be understood here, because the things referr'd to, deserve no such kindness. Besides, the next words, *of taking Vengeance,* sufficiently explain vvhhat kind of Visitation is here intended, viz. of Justice, and not of Mercy. *Psal.*  
106. 4.

2. The word signifies sometimes an Inquisition into the state of Affairs by a Judicial Process, as *Exod. 3. 16. I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done unto you;* that is, I have enquired into, examined, and consider'd your case: *Job 31. 14. When God visiteth, what shall I answer him?* Not that God needs any such thing to inform him, for he knows all the wickedness in the World as soon as it is acted; but he speaks after the manner of Men, for the clearer manifestation of his own Justice, and the greater terror to them: as it was in the case of *Sodom,*



Gen. 18. whose Sins cried to Heaven; yet says God, I will  
 21. go down and see whether they have done altogether according to the Cry which is come unto me: an expression rather of Justice than want of Intelligence.

3. The word also signifies the Execution of Justice in the Punishment of Sin: Numb. 16.  
 29. If they be visited after the visitation of all Men; that is, if they be punished, or cut off and destroyed in an ordinary manner. So Exod. 32.  
 34. In the day when I visit, I will visit their Sin upon them; that is, when I come to take Vengeance, they shall smart for it. Thus he is said to visit the iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children; that is, to punish them. And in either or both of these two last senses, are these words to be understood, whereby they do assure us, both of the Justice and Severity of God, against all ungodliness whatsoever. For as he will not proceed hand over head, as we commonly speak, and rashly condemn any, without enquiry into, and full knowledge of the Case: So he will be as strict and severe in the taking Vengeance, and none shall divert or hinder him from it.

II. What are those things that he thus visits for? You see, according to the Prophet's manner of expressing himself, it is for Sin and Wickedness; and by the coherence of these words with the rest of the Chapter, you will find of  
 what

what kind and quality their Sins were; and indeed they were of such a nature, that he neither could, nor would bear any longer with them; they are such as he hath always used to punish with the greatest Severity, especially too when the Guilt and Contagion of them hath been so deep and spreading, as theirs was at that time; as is plainly manifest throughout this Chapter. Nay, there is not any one of the Sins here mentioned, but is in it self so provoking in the sight of God, that it must needs be the occasion of very dreadful Calamities; what then can we expect from such a complication of Wickedness as is here said to be met together in one, but utter Ruine and Destruction?

1. They are accused of a general Failure and Neglect in the Affairs of Justice and Common Honesty; few or none applying themselves to the practice of Righteousness, to deal faithfully and truly in the World. A Sin as great in it self, as it was common amongst them; for the People of *Jerusalem* were generally so corrupt, that a Man might go to and fro, from Street to Street, yea, from House to House, for a long time and way together, and yet not light on any one Man, that was sincerely righteous and truly religious. And surely then it was high time for God to arise, both for the vindication of his own Truth and Justice, and for the Conviction and Punishment of the

*Verf. 1.*

noto-

notorious Defects in theirs: for tho' Almighty God may bear with wicked Men a long time; yet when the *Floods of Ungodliness* swell high, and like a mighty Torrent bear down all before them, he must and he always doth then appear, and enter upon his Visitation; and therefore, we shall find this Temper one of the immediate fore-runners, as well as just occasions, of a general Ruine and Destruction. When the old World was drown'd, it was because it was fill'd with Violence, all flesh had corrupted its way upon the Earth; and when Sodom and Gomorrah fell, it was not so much for the greatness, as the generality of their Wickedness: for as bad as they were, yet if there had bin but ten righteous Persons found there, they might, for ought I see, have remained to this very Day. And so it was here with Judah and Jerusalem. Nor was this the Fault of the poorer sort of People, but even of the greater, who, one would have thought, should have been better, as having greater Opportunities of knowing the Will of God, and more leisure to practise the same: But these (saith the Prophet) have altogether broken the Yoke, and burst the Bonds; as if their Greatness served only to empower them to do the greater Mischief, and then to protect them against the Laws.

2. They are accused of incorrigibleness under Judgments, that tho' they had been stricken, yet they had not greiv'd; yea, tho' they had been consumed, yet they

Psal. 18.

4

Gen. 6.

11, 12,

13.

Gen. 18.

32.

Mat. 11.

23.

Vers. 3.

Vers. 3.

*they refused to receive Correction.* They had been greatly wasted, and yet would not take warning; they had been severely corrected, and yet were never the better, or the more reformed; nay, they were grown the more obstinate and preverle, than which nothing can be more provoking unto God, there being in it that Obstinancy that gives the greatest malignity unto Sin, and those Aggravations that soonest fill up the measure of it.

3. They are accused of Adultery and Uncleaness, a Sin as great as any, and as severely punished in all Ages, as being greatly dishonorable unto God, and the occasion of great Confusion and injustice amongst Men, and yet committed by them with the same aggravations of Impudence, Frequency and Generality with the rest; yea, and with one more even amidst the abundance of outward Blessings to engage them to the contrary; *for when he fed them to the full, they then assembled themselves by Troops in the Harlots Houses*; whereby the plenty he afforded them, to strengthen and enable them the better for his Service, served only to pamper their Lusts; as if like so many Stallions they were fed on purpose to be the more lustful; *Every one, saith he, neighed after his Neighbours Wife*; that is, not only lusted after her in his Heart, but was impatient to obtain his lustful Desire upon her. *Verf. 8.*

4. They

4. They are accused of a disbelief of God's Word by his Prophets and Ministers; *The Prophets, say they, shall become Wind, and the Word is not in them.* They speak not from God, but fright us with bug-bear Tales of their own devising; the Evil they threaten shall befall themselves, and not us. A Sin so great in it self, that it's thought sufficient to be its own punishment; when wicked Men shut their eyes against the clearest Light, their Hearts have been hardened against the strongest Convictions; but that is not always the only punishment of it, but rather the forerunner of far greater Evils, and many times the means whereby those Evils are brought about: for when any Person, or People, laugh at God's Counsel, and will take none of his Reproofs, he commonly gives them up to a reprobate mind, whereby their destruction becomes the more great and certain: *for he that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his Heart, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without Remedy:* A Truth sadly fatal to the People of the Jews, against whom the Wrath of God arose for this very cause, as we are told *2 Chron. 36. 16. till there was no Remedy;* and I pray God it prove not as sadly so to us.

5. They are accused of Apostacy from God and Religion; *They have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no Gods:* An Offence of an heinous nature indeed, and such as God always very highly relents



resents as most against his Honour, and one of the highest Acts of Treason against his Crown and Dignity ; upon which account he is often stiled *A jealous God*, a temper that's always attended with an implacable rage and fury ; and therefore no wonder if the vengeance he intends to take, be exprest in a phrase that denotes the greatest resentment of a thing that can be, *Shall not my Soul be avenged?* an emphatical Speech indeed, and expresses the highest Passion, and such as engages the whole Power of God to make it good.

Exod.

20. 5.

Prov. 6.

34, 35.

6. They are accused of Deceit and Guile, in Conspiracies and Plots of Mischief, to undermine and ruine each other. *They lay wait as he that setteth Snares ; they set a Trap, they catch Men: as a Cage is full of Birds, so are their Houses full of deceit,* A Charge very great and heinous indeed, in as much as this particular Sin hath something of malignity in it more than the rest ; for besides the evil aspect it hath upon Religion, it has a fatal influence upon Society, and, not like the rest, occasions the ruin and destruction of the guilty only, but, by an unusual barbarousness and inhumanity, of the innocent too : and it hath often times this Ingredient too, to make it the more heinous, in that by false Oaths and Perjuries ( the most fatal Snares for Innocence ) it converts Government into Oppression, and Justice into Murder ; for when the Formalities of it are by such cursed Acts wrested

to the malice of such greedy Wolves; the Widows and the Orphans are in the greatest danger, and the just upright Man the soonest made a prey; than which, as nothing can be more dishonourable to Righteousness and Truth; so nothing more destructive to the Professors of it, since what God appointed for their refuge, doth but tempt them into danger; and that which, like the Horns of the Altar, was appointed for a Sanctuary, is turned into a *Golgotha*. And since this was the case of the Jews at that time, what could they expect but a speedy Visitation, and the severities of a just and impartial Vengeance from God? Nay,

7. The Prophets and Ministers themselves are accus'd of falseness and partiality in the Ministry of the Word; *The Prophets prophesy falsely*, a charge frequently brought against them, and urg'd as the occasion of most, if not of all the wickedness committed by that People, and by consequence, of all the calamities they at any time groan'd under. Wicked Men are apt enough of themselves to commit Sin; but when they are encouraged in it by those who should persuade them from it, whither will they not run? nay, where will they stop? If the Builders of God's Temple daub with untempered Mortar, no wonder if it quickly fall: if those, that should lift up their Voices like a Trumpet, and cry an Alarm, to awaken Men out of the

*Vers 31.*

*Ezek. 13.*  
10.

*Isa. 58.*  
2 *Chron.*

23. 12.

the

the Lethargy of Sin and carnal Security, *ſow Pil-* Ezek. 13.  
8.  
*lows under their Armholes*, and huſh them to ſleep  
vvith the ſtill and ſmooth Voice of *Peace, Peace,* Jer. 6. 14  
*when there is no Peace*: What can be expected, but  
that they ſhould remain ſo ſtill, till they ſleep in  
Death, and are only awakned by eternal Milery?  
And this was indeed the lamentable caſe of this  
People, and no wonder if their Deſtruction was  
unavoidable, ſince the only means of preventing  
it proved ſo deceitful.

8. They are charg'd alſo with an univerſal  
love and liking of theſe things; *This People love* Ver. 31.  
*to have it ſo.* They vv ere all, it ſeems, agreed,  
and conſenting together in Wickedneſs, not only  
giving themſelves up to the practice of it, but  
encouraging one another in it. And *when once a* Zeph. 1.  
12.  
*People are thus ſettled on their Lees*, and become  
Enemies to their own Mercies, no vvonder if  
*God ſearch them with Candles*, and viſit their Ini-  
quity vvith a Rod, and their Sin vvith Scourges;  
and then vve may vvell ſay to them, as the Pro-  
phet doth at the end of this Chapter ( or rather  
black Bill of Indictment ) drawn up againſt  
them, *What will ye do in the end hereof?* Verſ. 31.

And this leads me to the third Particular,  
which, becauſe it more nearly concerns us, I  
haſten unto, ſince it is to enquire, by way of  
compariſon, between us and them.

III. What Reason we of this Nation have to fear such a Visitation? We are told by the Apostle, *Whatever was written aforetime, was written for our Admonition.* And the Judgments of God upon wicked Men had a double design, to punish them, and to warn us; therefore they are said to be our *Examples*, to the intent we should not lust as they did. Now upon any remarkable Dispensation of God's Providence in that kind, it is natural to us to inquire into the Cause; for we know that God is too righteous to punish without it, and too merciful to delight in it; and when once we understand the true and just Reason of his proceeding, we do as naturally reflect upon our selves; and if we find our Sins to be as great and as many as theirs, we cannot but expect that our Calamities should be so too. But then here's our Misery, we endeavour to stifle the Evidence of our own Consciences; we suffer these Impressions to wear off, and then, *put far from us the Evil-day*; but now that we may no longer do so; let us but a little consider our own Condition at present, that we may not be brought into theirs at last; and this we may do by inquiring into three Things. 1. Our Sins. 2. Our Obligations to amend. And, 3. The Calls and Warnings we have had.

First, Are not our Sins as great as theirs? nay rather, are they not more and greater? The Charge indeed runs high against them, but when it comes to be brought against us, I fear it will swell into a Flood. To compare it only with theirs is but to lessen it; let it have its full length and weight, and it will be very black and large indeed. The Prophet, it's true, reckons up several, but I shall confine my self to three general Heads. 1. The Corruption of our Minds, as they are swerv'd from the Principles of Honesty and Truth. 2. The Corruption of our Morals, as our Manners are loose and wicked. 3. The Abuse of our Profession in matters of Religion, as we are either relapsing from the Stedfastness of it, or opening a Gap by our unnatural Divisions, to let in our mortal Enemies to ruine and destroy both us and it.

1. How are our Minds corrupted, and we degenerated from the Principles of Honesty and Truth! What a great scarcity of honest and righteous Men is there? in whom can we confide? whom can we trust? *For every Brother will sup- Jer. 9. 4. plant, and every Neighbour will walk with Slanders; yea, even amongst those that say, They have known Jer. 5. 5. the Mind of the Lord; and seen the Operation of his Psal. 28. Hands; what little Truth and Honesty is there to be found? Is not Intérest and a Party made the measure of upright dealing? and the meaning of*



of an honest Man, only one of our own way? and yet come to try or trust him, and he is no longer so, than it is for his own Advantage. Interest is the God we too much worship; nay, such fond and zealous Votaries are we become, that we vwill prostitute our selves to things mean and sordid, and far below our Station; and many times offer up our best Friends, nay, our own Consciences, yea, God's Truth it self, in Sacrifice to it; yea, so greatly are our Minds debauch'd by such false and destructive Principles, that vve are not only led into Errour, but even delight in our own Wandrings; and when any Means are offered to inform and direct us better, vve presently suspect, and nickname them, and use all the Art we can to render them fruitless and vain; and if once vve can but lay them under an odious Character, vve are proof against all their most vvholeesome Offers and Directions. But,

2. Are our Morals much better than our Principles? If our Lives be but look'd into, our Sins, I fear, vwill be found reaching unto the Clouds, and spreading themselves to every corner of the Land, not a Place nor Person that is free. To descend to Particulars is not vvithin the compass of my Time or Intention at present, but it may and ought to be vvithin yours: It is not for me here to point, and say, Thou art the Man, but I think

think it becomes every one of us to lay his hand upon his Heart, and to cry, I am he. Perhaps we may not, nay, we cannot all of us be guilty of the same Sins; our Conditions, our Constitutions, our Relations, our Ages, our Ranks and Qualities in the World are different; and there are particular Sins, incident to every one of these, which possibly others may neither have Opportunity, nor be in a Capacity to commit: But then there are others that are more general, which we may all of us run into, and which hardly any Rank or Condition can exempt us from; and these are Vices too commonly known and practised amongst us; nay, I wish there were not too much cause to say, countenanced, justified and gloried in. How frequently do Oaths and Curses vent themselves, not only in our passionate, but in our most sober and deliberate Discourses, as if we thought them the chiefest Ornaments of Speech! How is Drunkenness and Excess not only practised, but, by its frequency, made light of; nay, by many little Arts and Devices, which otherwise might be innocent enough, encouraged and promoted! Good-Hospitality, cheerful Entertainments, kind and grateful remembrances of Friends and Benefactors, may be useful and necessary sometimes; but when I must be forc'd to drink up to another Man's measure or humour, and as  
often

often as he thinks fit to begin a Health, must be obliged to pledg it both in kind and quantity; This makes our Table to become our Snare, this turns innocent Mirth into Madness, a Love-Feast, as indeed all Feasts should be, into an heathenish Revelling, and a commendable Hospitality into Beastliness and Sensuality. And then follows commonly another Sin, which is now become the Reproach and Scandal of our Age and Nation too, as if we would to a tittle make good the Prophet's Charge in this Chapter. Our full feeding makes us lustful and unclean; nay, as if we would go beyond it, we not only *assemble by Troops in the Harlots Houses*, but we even take them into our own, and maintain them with more Delicacy and Tenderness, than is commonly afforded to a lawful Wife; yea, with greater Extravagance and Expence than a numerous Family requires and needs. You know that what I say is too true; for to our *shame* be it spoken, *These things are not done in a Corner*; for these Vices do not only follow the Courts of Princes, and fly into the Country, but creep into the City too; God grant they never step up upon the Bench! Besides which, what notorious Prophanation of God's Day is upon every happy return of it to be seen, whilst by some it is neglected, and one half of it slept away, and the other half as idly spent, either abroad in the Fields, if the Weather invite,

Ver. 8.

Act. 26.  
26.

invite, or the pretence of going to hear some fam'd Preacher two or three Miles out of Town, excuse the itch of Curiosity and a rambling Humour, or else in a Tavern or in an Ale house, where God's Name and Day are by a cursed Epitome both prophaned and abused together, and his Worship too often entrenched upon: for those Places are not only frequented when the Doors of God's House are shut, and his publick Service ended, but even when they are open, and every good Christian should be engaged therein. Had we no Laws to prevent and restrain these things, they would only be Personal Sins; but since we have, and those wholesome and strong enough, the not putting them in Execution, will I fear, make them all become National. Be but then so faithful to your selves as to consider what will be the end of these Things, whether God will not visit and take Vengeance upon us, as well as upon others in the like Case, and what we shall do then when he doth so? But,

3. From our Principles and Practices let us proceed to our Profession and Behaviour in matters of Religion, and I am afraid our Hypocrisie, Unbelief, and Apostacy, will be found as great as theirs, if not greater, by how much the Religion we profess is more refin'd and clear, than theirs was. How infinitely we are beholden to Almighty God for the Purity and Simplicity

of his Gospel, I need not tell you; I wish it did not as fully discover the greatness of our Abuse and Neglect of it! We have, it's true, enjoyed it for many Years, and that not as it hath been mixed with the Trash of the Church of *Rome*, but as it hath been rescued from their sacrilegious Hands, and restored to its native Plainness and Simplicity; but alas, like the Children of *Israel*, when delivered out of *Egypt*, we are returning back thither again, and think the Onions and Garlick of their Superstitious Popperies better than the Milk and Honey of the best Reformation that ever was. What Arts have been used to introduce Popery? and what a ready and cheerful Compliance have they met with by too many of us? So that we seem ready to apostatize from that Truth, which Christ and his Apostles left us, and which by the Blood of so many Martyrs of our own Nation hath been sealed and confirmed to us. How many are there that are making *Friends of the unrighteous Mammon*, and securing to themselves an Interest amongst those, whom by the Laws of God and Man they ought to avoid, thereby betraying themselves into those Snares they pretend to fear, and which nothing but such a cowardly and sordid Compliance can force them into. Blessed be God, we have the Government on our side yet, the Laws are both our Warrant and Defence, besides which the Reason

Luke 19.

2.



Reason of our own Minds convinceth us, and the true Interest of our Country calls upon us to be valiant for the Truth, and therefore if we fall back and forsake it, and swear by them that are no Gods, as in Popery we must, our Guilt will be almost, if not altogether, unpardonable, *How shall I pardon thee for this,* saith God by the Prophet: *But I hope better things of you,* and things that accompany Salvation, *tho I thus speak,* and that you will never wittingly do any thing that may be the occasion of so great Mischief to your selves and Country. But there is one thing, which if not speedily prevented, will before we are aware, let in that which we so much fear and cry out against, and which perhaps too too many of us more or less may be accessary to, I mean those unnatural Heats and Divisions amongst our selves, amidst which, tho we are not altogether swerv'd from the Form, yet we are strangely degenerated from the true Spirit and Power of Godliness and Christianity, which is indeed a most pernicious sort of Apostacy; for a false Religion, that's good natured and kind, gentle and easy to be intreated, is better than the Profession of the truest Religion in the World, that's accompanied with Heart-burnings and Animosities, and immoderately heated by unchristian Strifes and Debates; and that this is our Case at this Day is evident enough; but how fatal the Effects and Consequence thereof will be, I am afraid to think

Jer. 9. 3.

chap. 5. 7.

ver. 7.

Heb. 6. 9.

2 Tim. 3. 5.

Jam. 3. 17.

of. God of his Mercy divert the *Omen*, and unite us more firmly to himself, and to one another; for whilst there is envying, strife, and divisions amongst us, *we are not only carnal, and*  
*1 Cor. 3. 3 walk as Men;* but whilst we foment and encourage these things, we become *earthly, sensual, yea,*  
*Jam. 3. 15, 16. devilish;* and then we must needs introduce *Confusion, and every evil Work:* that which we fear will come upon us, yea, we shall bring it upon our selves; and then it will be too late to enquire  
*Jer. 5. 3. 1. what we shall do in the end thereof.* But,

Secondly, Since our Sins are so many and great, let us, in imitation of the Prophets faithfulness in the Case, enquire into the Obligations that have been laid upon us to reform and amend. He aggravates their Sins with this Circumstance, that they were acted by them, *when God gave them*  
*ver. 24. Rain, both the former and latter in its Season, and reserved to them the appointed Weeks of the Harvest:*  
*ver. 7. yea, when he fed them to the full,* that is, bestowed upon them the greatest abundance of all outward Blessings. And if upon an impartial inquiry into the thing, it be found that Almighty God has been in all respects as bountiful unto us, we may as reasonably expect that he should call us to an account for the abuse of his Mercies, as well as for the breach of his Laws: yea, and more too, because these are a kind Obligation added to the Authority of the other; and there's nothing  
whets

whets and sharpens the Sword of Justice more, than Ingratitude ; it gives indeed a double edge to it, the one from the Power that is so justly incensed, and the other from the Kindness that is so grossly abused. Well then, to consider the Case before us, What variety of signal Mercies have we been blest with for a long time together ? What miraculous and repeated Deliverances have we had ? What Attempts have been made upon our Peace and Tranquillity, and how often have they been frustrated and disappointed ? and may they for ever be so. How often have our Lives and Liberties been struck at and assaulted ? and yet they have been as often rescued and preserv'd ; and may they be so still. What desperate Attempts have been made to destroy both our Religion and Government, and how graciously have they been protected and defended, and all this almost by Miracle ; for we have, as it were, only *stood still and seen the Salvation of God.* Upon the amazing Methods of <sup>Exod. 14.</sup> which, as we have reason to look back with wonder and delight, so we have reason also to reflect upon our own Ingratitude with horror and amazement ; especially too, if we consider that to all the publick Mercies which we have such a comfortable share in, there's not a Man of us but has many particular Blessings besides, that deserve as great a measure of acknowledgment.

as the rest. And when all these shall be summed  
 Psa. 139. up together, ( and, O God, how great is the sum  
 17. of them ! ) and we call'd to an account for the im-  
 provement, wherewithal shall we appear ! what  
 shall we answer ! good God ! what will become  
 of us ! But,

Thirdly, That which aggravated their Sin to  
 the height, was the many Warnings and Calls  
 they had to reform and amend ; and yet, said he,  
 v. 12, 13. they have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he ; nei-  
 ther shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see the  
 Sword or Famine : nay, the Prophets themselves  
 shall become Wind, and the Word is not in them. And  
 this I am afraid will fill up the measure of our  
 sins too : for he hath often called us, and we have  
 refused to hearken ; he hath given us many fair  
 Warnings, but we have hardened our hearts a-  
 gainst them ; he hath shaken his Rod over us, yea,  
 and sometimes let us feel the smart of it, but we  
 Jer. 5. 3. have refused to receive Correction ; we have deafned  
 our Ears to the louder and more dreadful Voice  
 of his Judgments, and hardned our Hearts against  
 the still and smooth Voice of his Word. He hath  
 2 Thess. sometimes come in flaming Fire, taking vengeance ;  
 1. 8. and if, during the heat of its devouring Fury, we  
 have been a little warm in our Devotions, and  
 something melted into Repentance ; yet as that  
 hath abated, we have cool'd and return'd, not  
 only to our former, but have even contracted a  
 far

far greater degree of hardness. Sometimes he hath enlarged the Commission of his *destroying Angel*, and made the *Pestilence, that walks in darkness, to waste at noon-day*: And if amidst dying Groans, and infectious Fears, we have been made to relent; when they have been removed, so have our Relentings too, and a greater Plague behind, even that of Sin, and hardness of Heart. Sometimes he hath unsheathed the bloody Sword of War, and if amidst the merciless and inhumane slaughters it has made, we have been forced to sue for Peace, how have we abused it when we have had it, yea, even been weary of it too, whilst we have broke out into as unnatural, tho' not altogether so bloody a War against one another? Blessed be God, our Swords are not yet drawn, but our Tongues and our Pens are, and with these we cut like a sharp Razor; and instead of uniting in our praises to God for our Civil Peace and Plenty, we are distracting our own Devotions, yea, and provoking, (I had almost said devouring) one another, whilst our Adversaries, in the day they look for, (which God grant may never come) will make no difference, but swallow us up together, and laugh at us too, to see how dextrously we do their Work for them our selves. But this is not all; for these and many others of the like nature have been back'd and enforc'd upon us; by many seasonable and pious



Discourses. The Ministers of the Gospel have applied themselves to the Times, Places, and Persons they have liv'd in, and been sent unto; and yet I am afraid, instead of hearkening and inclining the Ear, we have too too many of us  
*Jer. 7. 26* hardened our Hearts, and done worse than our Fathers: and if so, what can we expect, but that he should deal worse by us than ever he hath done yet? for that's always the method of his proceedings. When he varies the method of his Providence, and finds that neither Kindness nor Severity will work upon us, but that we easily  
*Hos. 11. 4.* break all the Cords of his Love, and rust under the very File, his Patience is soon turned into Fury, his Pity into an implacable Revenge; his Mercy adds both speed and weight unto his Justice, and transforms a most compassionate Father into a consuming Fire; for God will certainly visit for these things, where ever they are, his Soul will be avenged on such a Nation, let its outward condition be what it will: And this leads me to the fourth and last Particular, which is to enquire,

IV. What we are to do in such a Case, and under such Circumstances as ours are. That we have bin notoriously guilty of the Breach of God's Laws, notwithstanding all that he hath done to keep us within the bounds of our Duty and Obedience, cannot be denied; that we are therefore

in very great danger of being very severely handled, if not utterly destroyed, is apparently evident to all, that are not obstinately resolv'd to run all hazards, rather than take up and amend. It's but natural and reasonable then for us, to enquire what we are to do to prevent our own Ruine, and no longer cry out only, and complain of the dangerous Times we live in; but to be very speedy in our Resolutions what to do to make them better. And here I suppose every one will be ready to tell you what's to be done. Some cry, Open and enlarge the Church-doors, and let in the Dissenters, and then all will be well; others cry, Shut them out, or we shall never be at Peace. Some cry, Away with Impositions and Ceremonies, the Reliques of Popery and Earnest of its Return: Others complain of Schism and Separation, Faction and Sedition, that the Dissenters do the Jesuits Work; and you may as well tolerate the one, as connive at the other. Some found our Peace and our Plenty in a general Toleration; others tell you, It's the next way to Ruine and Confusion, and all this while few or none will take any Advice but their own; so that amidst the several Prescriptions, we are ready to perish, and that not because we want Help, but rather because we have too much, our Danger not being so much from our Disease, as the Multitude and Disagreement of our Physicians; for whilst they

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are:

are disputing what's fittest for us to take, our Distemper grows upon us, and before we can agree, we languish and die. For my part I shall not presume to interpose this way, but shall leave all things of this nature to my Superiours, to whom they properly belong, resolving to be obedient in all things, as far as a good Conscience will give me Leave, and where it will not, to endeavour with as much Cheerfulness as I can to suffer and submit; and I think it would be never the worse for us, if we would all of us do so too. Besides which, I have only two or three things to add farther by way of Exhortation, and shall then conclude.

1. The first is, That we endeavour to make our Peace with God as speedily as we can, by an unfeigned Repentance and thorough Reformation. Our Comfort is, that we have a God to deal with, that is as ready to receive us, as we can be to return unto him; and desires to be at Peace with us, as much as we can do, that get most by it. Now since it is not the distance of his Heighth and Greatness, nor the Severity and Rigour of his Nature, but our *Iniquities that have separated between us and our God*: The speedy breaking off of them will be the most effectual way to procure a lengthening of our Tranquillity; and indeed it cannot reasonably be expected any other way. For *who ever hardned himself against God,*

*Isa. 59. 2*

*Dan. 4.  
27.*

*Job 9. 4.*

*God,*

God, and prospered? We may be let alone for a time; but to think that we shall always be so, is as absurd and foolish a Conclusion as can be; for the longer we have been spared, the less time is behind. The more we have been suffered to multiply our Sins, the sooner will the measure of them be filled up. The longer God's Hand has been with-held, the higher it has been lifted up, and the Heavier it will fall at last. For God's sake then, and your own, for your Country's and Religions sake; yea, for the sake of all that's near and dear to you, that you may no more see *Beauty turned into Ashes, and Death riding triumphantly upon his Pale Horse* through all your Streets, and the Sword devouring any more Flesh; That you may not be *punished seven times more*, and worse than you have been, think of these things, and think often and seriously of them too, and suffer not the Impressions that such Reflections commonly make, to wear off again without doing their desired and necessary Work. Let not your Repentance be only a crying out of the Sins of others, which is rather a venting the Spleen, than a true humbling of the Soul: Nor let it be exercised upon your selves upon some solemn Occasions only, and whilst you are under the Strength and Power of a present Conviction, which is indeed for the most part but like throwing a little Water upon the Fire, which though

Isa. 61. 3.

Rev. 6. 9.

Levit. 26.

18.

it may damp it a little for the present ; yet afterwards it makes it burn the fiercer, but let it be seen in a constant and regular Disposition of Mind, fortified with firm Resolutions to return no more unto Folly, and in a constant endeavour to keep all the Commandments of God

Jam. 3.

17.

Mat. 12.

43, 44.

45.

2. Pet. 2.

20.

without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy ; for else we shall but sweep and garnish the House for seven worse Spirits, that will not be so easily cast out, but will make our latter End worse than our Beginning.

2. Be exhorted to maintain and promote Peace and Concord amongst all Men. Next to Peace with God, without which all other security will prove deceitful, Unity amongst our selves is certainly the most effectual thing to the making of us an happy People ; and till that be attain'd, we may possibly be quiet, but we shall never be safe. We are continually liable to the malice of our Enemies, and nothing exposes us, and encourageth them more, than our unnatural Divisions amongst our selves ; by these they grow upon us daily ; and indeed, their greatest Stratagem is, to foment and encrease them, as well knowing it in vain to make any other Assaults upon us. Should they invade us with their whole Power and Strength, we might then possibly unite, and, under God, be certainly too hard for them. This they know, and fear, and therefore dare



dare not attempt us openly, but hope for an  
 easy Victory, when, like *Gideon*, they see every  
*Man's Sword against his fellow*. And shall we *Judg. 7.*  
 now give them such an Opportunity? God for-  
 bid! and yet I fear we are in a very fair way to  
 it, and there's nothing certainly can prevent it,  
 but by doing what in us lies, to live peaceably with *Rom. 12.*  
*all Men*; and this I am perswaded that all of you  
 know and believe. But then, here's our misfor-  
 tune; though we all of us cry aloud for Peace,  
 yet as long as we expect it only in our own way,  
 we are never like to have it. It's next to an im-  
 possibility, that all the World should in every  
 thing be of one and the same mind; but yet for  
 all that, there's no necessity that we should  
 wrangle and fall out, as alas we too frequently  
 do; and yet when we have what we desire, it's  
 many times not worth the Bustle we make to ob-  
 tain it. Most of the Disputes that are raised a-  
 mongst us, have more of Heat and Passion, In-  
 terest and Pride, than weight of Reason in them:  
 Nay, the greatest Matters in Controversie, do  
 neither need nor require that fierceness and heat  
 with which they are too often managed; nay, I  
 fear, they are greatly worsted by it. The great-  
 est Matters in the Debate between us and the  
 Dissenters, are in the general owned on both  
 sides. We very truly, and upon good ground,  
 urge the necessity of Obedience to lawful Author-

nity:

rity ; nor do they deny the truth of it, they only  
 plead an Exemption for Conscience sake, when  
 any thing unlawful is required ; and this we can-  
 not deny neither ; only here's the Question, Whe-  
 ther these things are unlawful or no ? And cannot  
 this now be argued without all this eagerness and  
 heat ? Cannot we dispute, but we must be ready  
 to devour ? Must our Disputes, which are the  
 best sort of Christians, make us cease to be Men ;  
 and by contending for the Church, hazard the  
 ruine of the State. Certainly this temper does  
 very ill become the Name of a Christian, and  
 does by no means answer the great Ends and  
 Purposes of the Gospel. Men's Minds are not  
 to be convinced by hard Names, and ill Lan-  
 guage, but by Truth and Right Reason, and  
 that too urg'd with good Nature and Love ; for  
 even Truth it self is recommended to us under  
 the greatest disadvantage that can be, when it's  
 accompanied with fierceness and passion ; such  
 an everlasting Truth is St. James's Assertion, That  
*the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of*  
*God.*

*Jam. 1.*  
 20.

Now if the Government think fit to require  
 such things of us, and we all profess it our duty  
 to yield an active Obedience, as far as with a  
 good Conscience vve can, and vvhether vve can-  
 not, to submit, but by no means to resist ; vvhether  
 hinders us but that we may do this without flying  
 at

at one anothers Throats, to the disturbance of the Government, to the scandal of Christianity, and to our own certain Ruin and Confusion? It is not for private Christians (and of such only I am speaking) to manage themselves after this sort, but rather, *as the Elect of God, to put on bowels of Mercy, Kindness, humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake shall forgive us*; for without this temper we shall never be secure and safe. Let us then at length return unto a better Mind, and in all things act according to the Duty of our Places, and especially in this; for when we have wrangled and vex'd one another as long as we can, we can neither make new Laws, nor alter the Old; our Duty and Business therefore is, to submit peaceably to them we have, and to make our condition under them, as easy and as comfortable as we can, till God shall find out a way to mend it. And in the mean time,

3. Lastly, Let us pray unto that God, by whom Kings Reign, and Princes decree Justice, to inspire the Heart of the King with true heavenly Wisdom; and to guide and direct all others, that are or shall be called to Publick Actions and Counsels, and are thereby any ways concern'd in the administration of Justice, and making of Laws, that some effectual Means may be found out,

Col. 3.  
12, 13.

Prov. 8.  
15.

out, in a Legal and Christian way, to compose our Differences, and heal our Breaches: And that he would also, in the mean time, allay those Unnatural and Unchristian Distempers of our Minds, and dispose us to a more sober and upright walking before him; to a ready and true Christian submission to the Government we live under, and are so happy in the constitutions of, and to an universal and unfeigned Love and Charity to one another; that so when God shall come to visit us, as certainly he will, it may be a Visitation of Mercy and Kindness, and not of Fury and Indignation; that his *whole Heart*, and his *whole Soul*, may rejoice over us to do us good; and not to be provoked to execute Vengeance upon us.

Jer. 32.  
42.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, for the sake, and in and through the Merits of the ever blessed Jesus; To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Glory, and Praise. Amen.

F I N I S.